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Progress Towards Mine-Free Goal Amidst Pandemic, Improvised Mine Use, and Elevated Casualties

(Geneva, 12 November 2020): As countries strive collectively to make progress towards a mine-free world amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, remaining challenges include: new use of improvised landmines by non-state armed groups (NSAGs), a continuing high number of civilian casualties, and a decrease in global mine action assistance, according to *Landmine Monitor 2020*, the 22nd annual edition of the Landmine Monitor report, released today.

Twenty-three years of life-saving success

“A total of 164 countries are bound by the Mine Ban Treaty 23 years after being adopted. That is more than 80% of the world, with most of the 33 countries remaining outside acting in *de facto* compliance. This is a humanitarian success story”, said Steve Goose, Human Rights Watch Arms Division Director and *Landmine Monitor 2020* Ban Policy contributor.

Only one state—Myanmar, not party to the treaty—was confirmed to have used antipersonnel landmines during the Monitor reporting period from mid-2019 through October 2020. During that period, NSAGs were found to have used antipersonnel mines in at least six countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, India, Libya, Myanmar, and Pakistan.

The vast destruction of antipersonnel mine stocks continues to be one of the great successes of the Mine Ban Treaty. To date, States Parties have destroyed more than 55 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines, including more than 269,000 destroyed in 2019.

Recurring and emerging challenges

Notably, 2019 was the fifth year in a row with high numbers of recorded casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), largely as a result of intensive armed conflict and the large-scale impact of improvised mines. At least 5,554 casualties from mines/ERW were recorded, more than half of which were caused by improvised mines (2,949). Civilians still accounted for the vast majority of casualties (80%) and children represented nearly half of all civilian casualties (43%).

“Seven years ago, we reached an all-time low in new landmine casualties. But this achievement has overturned, and we are seeing heightened numbers of civilians killed and wounded. Appallingly, nearly half of all these casualties are children. We need to act now to reverse this trend, to save lives, and to address the trauma and suffering with much needed assistance.” said Loren Persi, Impact editor of *Landmine Monitor 2020*.

2019 also saw a reduction in global funding to mine action, with 45 donors and affected states contributing approximately US\$650.7 million, a 7% decrease compared to 2018. International support fell below \$600

million for the first time since 2016 (\$561.3 million). Ten affected states collectively reported providing some \$89 million.

As of October 2020, 33 States Parties are known to be contaminated with antipersonnel mines and are required to clear all contaminated areas within their respective deadline. Six of those appear to be on target, while eight countries requested extensions to their clearance obligations in 2020 and will be considered at the upcoming [Meeting of States Parties](#) taking place virtually from 16 to 20 November 2020.

“With seven States Parties having or requesting deadlines after 2025, it is essential that treaty stakeholders not lose sight of our completion goal and remain vigilant in order to achieve clearance obligations as soon as possible. In Oslo last year, states agreed to address remaining contamination to the fullest extent possible by 2025. This must be translated into concrete progress on the ground in *all* affected States Parties,” said ICBL Ambassador and survivors rights advocate, Margaret Arach Orech. “Every mine left in the ground, represents a human toll in lives and limbs lost,” she added.

Despite some reported improvements in the accessibility, quality, or quantity of services for victims in States Parties, important challenges and accessibility gaps remained in all countries. In 2020, COVID-19 related restrictions prevented survivors and other persons with disability from accessing services and from exercising their rights on an equal basis in a number of mine-affected countries. The impact of the pandemic was compounded by years of under-resourcing for victim assistance activities in many countries.

Resilience in mine action

This marks the first time since 2008 that the Monitor has reported on risk education, reflecting a global reprioritizing of this activity. The latest report notes a significant and positive turning point, with at least 28 States Parties conducting risk education activities for affected population.

“Risk education is a core pillar of mine action, but one that has tended to receive little attention by the mine action community in the last decade” said Ruth Bottomley, Impact editor and research specialist on contamination, clearance and risk education of *Landmine Monitor 2020*. “The renewed focus on this important pillar is welcome and essential in ensuring that life-saving risk education can be provided to communities living with new and legacy contamination,” she added.

In 2020, the new coronavirus pandemic also impacted risk education efforts given the in-person nature of many activities. However, operators have shown innovation in addressing challenges through use of online outreach and combining risk education and COVID-19 messaging, further demonstrating the value of synergies and resilience within the mine action sector.

Efforts to make mine-contaminated areas safe again

Landmine Monitor 2020 also reports on mine clearance progress during the previous year as States worked towards their mine-free targets. At least 156km² of land was reported cleared of landmines in 2019 and more than 123,000 landmines destroyed. These are both increases from 2018. Most States Parties reported some clearance activities in 2019, including countries facing ongoing conflicts such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen.

Chile became the most recent State Party to declare completion of clearance of all mined areas in early 2020, joining the 31 states and one other area that have completed clearance of all mined areas on their territory since 1999.

###Ends###

About the Monitor:

Landmine Monitor 2020 is released by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in advance of the Mine Ban Treaty Eighteenth Meeting of States Parties taking place 16–20 November. Detailed country-specific information is available in online country profiles, while the chapters in the report provide global analysis and findings. The report focuses on calendar year 2019, with information included into October 2020 in some cases.

Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor is the research arm of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC). The ICBL was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its work to eradicate landmines. The Monitor is coordinated by a Monitoring and Research Committee comprised of ICBL-CMC expert staff, research team leaders, and representatives of five non-governmental organizations: DanChurchAid, Danish Demining Group, Human Rights Watch, Humanity & Inclusion, and Mines Action Canada.

Links:

- ***Landmine Monitor 2020* landing page**, including major findings, new maps, and infographics - bit.ly/LandmineMonitor2020;
- **ICBL** - www.icbl.org;
- **Mine Ban Treaty** - www.apminebanconvention.org;
- **Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor Twitter** - twitter.com/MineMonitor;
- **ICBL Twitter** - twitter.com/minefreeworld;
- **ICBL Facebook** - facebook.com/pg/minefreeworld;
- **Landmine Monitor 2020 on Flickr** - bit.ly/LMM2020flickr.

For more information, or to schedule an interview, contact:

Jared Bloch, Communications and Network Administration Manager, (CET), ICBL-CMC, Mobile/WhatsApp +41 (0) 78-683-4407 or email media@icblcmc.org.

Marion Loddo, Editorial Manager, ICBL-CMC, Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, (CET), Mobile/WhatsApp +41 (0) 78-677-4040 or email marion@icblcmc.org.